



c.69.6: bells & bellringing, by Mike Petty

1898 04 11

At the vestry meeting of St Paul's church, Cambridge the chairman said that every Sunday morning their quiet communion service was greatly disturbed by the Roman Catholic Church bells. When they first started they hoped they would get used to them, but, as they continued to disturb them he took the opportunity of speaking to the Roman Catholic priest, and he said he would consult his congregation. But for a long time he could get no response, but afterwards he replied that the St Paul's bells rang for five minutes before eight o'clock, and disturbed the Roman Catholic service. The speaker had given orders that St Paul's bell should be wrung for half a minute to warn the people, and half a minute when the service was to commence, and expressed a hope that the Roman Catholic priest would see his way to having his rung for a short time only. This he refused to do, and so every Sunday morning half the St Paul's quiet service was disturbed by the ringing of the Roman Catholic bells. Mr Catling also spoke of the noisy bells of the Catholic Church, and the disturbance caused to those living around

1898 05 28

There was but little crush as the stream of mourners poured from all quarters of the town into Great St Mary's Church for the Memorial Service to Mr Gladstone. A subdued calm seem to fall like a veil over the centre of Cambridge as the bell tolled forth its tale of loss to the nation, and a hush, as it were, of the chamber of death seemed even to spread itself over the busy market place. Quietly the people filed into the Church and stepped into the first empty pew; none stopping to haggle for a seat. Even as the doors were being closed, as the last bars of the echoing National Anthem waned to science, latecomers yet found room in one or other of the galleries, and no one was turned from the Church

1898 06 24

Chesterton bells, p2

1899 02 11

Sir – In order to affix the new clock St Matthew's church bells have been floored. A very strong protest should be made against the bells being again re-hung, for of all the abominable, discordant clanging, nothing can be compared to them for wretched sound. Instead of drawing people to church, they are calculated to drive people away from them as fast as possible. The effect on the nerves of the

poor inhabitants is dreadful. They should be condemned as a most intolerable nuisance to a large section of the people in this thickly populated district – “Cantab” 1899 02 11

1899 04 01

At midnight the new clock which has been erected at St Matthews Church, Cambridge, will chime for the first time. Until recently the bells of the church hung outside the building, but now a turret has been erected at the West End and here the clock has been placed. It is “Ting Tang” quarter clock erected as a memorial to the vicar’s late wife.

1899 05 24

Today, Queen Victoria attains her 80th birthday, and British subjects in all parts of her Majesty's dominions are celebrating the occasion. Cambridge has not attempted anything in the nature of a public demonstration. This was not to be expected, but Cambridge is none the less loyal on that account, and there are in almost all parts of the town, outward and visible signs of rejoicing. Numerous Union Jacks and other national emblems are displayed in the principal thoroughfares, and the church bells have all been rung in honour of the event. At the Roman Catholic Church the national anthem was chimed between 12 and 1 o'clock, and the ringing of the bells may be expected to continue at intervals throughout the day

1900

1901 01 23

The melancholy news, which everyone knew could not be long delayed, of the death of Queen Victoria, was received in Cambridge in this brief announcement: - “The Queen passed away at 6.30”. The Cambridge Daily News gave publicity to the melancholy event to those who in Cambridge were waiting with anxiety for the latest intelligence, and almost immediately telegrams were posted at the University Union Society and at the Guildhall. The tolling of bells at many of the churches and college chapels also served to spread the sad news and this morning the borough bore a complete aspect of mourning for the loss of our beloved Queen. Royal Standards are flying half-mast and black ties and other emblems of mourning are being worn by members of the University and the townsmen

1901 01 25

With the solemnities and ceremonies accustomed on like occasions, His Majesty King Edward VII was proclaimed by the University of Cambridge in succession to Victoria, the Well-Beloved. This morning, while the minute bell was mournfully tolling, while black shutters were up at almost every shop window and flags were at half-mast, crowds of scarlet-robed Doctors, sedate Dons and vivacious undergraduates were hurrying towards the Senate House to take part in the ceremony of a lifetime – to proclaim Edward VII King

1902 09 08

Sir – Of all places Cambridge seems to suffer most from the plague of bell-ringing. It is not time the custom was discouraged? Now every home possesses at least one timepiece church bell-ringing seems superfluous. What must be the sufferings of any nervous invalid in or near Jesus Lane, compelled to lie and listen, sometimes for twenty minutes on end, to the doleful “Ding, dang, dong” which comes from that direction. Why should people be allowed to murder the calm of a Sabbath evening with the hideous din of their bellwhacking? – Americus

1907 06 22

The chimes of St Giles church clock in Cambridge have been restored after a silence of six years. Notice was given in the Parish Magazine but all do not read that excellent periodical and there was much astonishment when the bells entered anew upon their purpose of telling out the hours. The tone of the large bell is much improved now it has been re-hung so that it no longer rests against the wall
07 06 22c

1910 05 13

Many in Cambridge had left home before the news of the Death of King Edward VII was known but in an hour or two there were signs of mourning everywhere. Many of the tradespeople draped their shutters, blinds were drawn at private residences, church bells were tolled and flags hoisted half-mast on the public buildings. During the morning when the streets were filled with crowds of country people from the surrounding villages it was almost the exception to find anyone without some note of black in their attire 10 05 13c & d CWN

1911 01 27

The famous old bells in the chapel tower of Trinity College have been re-cast and lowered in tone by Messrs Taylor of Loughborough. They had not previously been taken down since their erection. The largest one bears the date 1610 and was made by Richard Holdeld, another is the work of Thomas Osborn of Downham and was put in the tower in 1795 while the third dates back to 1726. They have not been striking properly for some time past. The late Lord Grimthorpe left money for the provision of a new clock which was obtained in September. 11 01 27

1912 02 23

Sir – In recent years many parishes have had their church bells re-hung in metal cages, instead of in oak cages, which was the old method. This is likely to harm old church towers. A properly-constructed bell-cage stands clear of the walls so that the timbers can spring and a minimum of jar is transmitted to the tower. When metal cages are fixed rigidly the vibration loosens the masonry and cracks the walls, causing damage not easily repaired. Old towers are valuable works of art: who is happy to risk damage coming to them? – A.R. Powys. 12 02 23i

1912 03 01

Church bells and church towers – H.B. Woolley – 12 03 01d

1912 08 16

A meeting of the Women's Social and Political Union was being held and soon after Miss Kathleen Jarvis began her speech the bells of Great St Mary's struck up a deafening peal. The fair speaker's voice, pleasing but not powerful, was almost completely lost and it was only by her gesticulations that the crowd could see she was still expounding her principles. For something like an hour the unequal contest was maintained. And Miss Jarvis was the winner. A woman who had earned three periods of imprisonment was not to be daunted and was still pouring out a stream of argumentative bullets when the ringers retired - 12 08 16aa & b

1917 10 10

Lady Bellringer. Mrs. Percy Taylor is acting as bellringer at Great St. Mary's Church. She is thus continuing the unique record of her husband's family in connection with the belfry of the University Church. For 38 years the late Mr. George Taylor, who died in 1915, was steeple-keeper at the church, and on his death his son Alfred took over the duties. He has since passed away, and succeeded by a younger brother, Mr. Percy Taylor. The latter has now joined the Colours, and his wife is serving in the belfry during her husband's absence 17 10 10 CIPof

1918 05 23

Ancient church bells in Cambridge by A.H.F. Boughey – history – 17 05 23c

1918 11 13

End of the war rejoicings: huge crowds celebrate ... news arrived about eleven and spread like wildfire ... Union Jack hoisted at Town Hall and soon youngsters cheering in the streets ... bunting ... rush to post office to despatch telegrams ... unhappily undergraduates degenerated into a vulgar rag ... broke windows, wrecked old police courts. Gt St Mary's bells did not ring – some foolish person smashed the lock on the door and tried to pull them up and chime at the same time. Chiming hammers forced out of position and wooden supports smashed – 18 11 13a,b,c

1919 07 23

Peace Day Festival. The Peace Day Festival in Cambridge may be written down as a decided success. In the main event of the day—a huge dinner on Parker's Piece to the discharged and demobilised men of the Borough—there was not a hitch of any kind. The arrangements were as near perfect as could be secured and the men seemed thoroughly to enjoy themselves. The town presented a gay appearance, all the principal thoroughfares being decorated with flags, streamers, etc. Nearly every side-street, too, had its decorations - there were flags and bunting everywhere. Immediately under the Guildhall clock was a large laurel wreath in the centre of which were the words "Their name liveth for evermore." At intervals during the day peals were rung on church bells. Several of the business premises in the town were illuminated with coloured lights during the evening.

1920

1923 10 17

The seventh bell at Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, which was cracked on armistice night by some over-enthusiastic revellers, has just been returned from the founders. It now inclined on a pedestal in the nave of the Church awaiting re-fixing in the tower, and there it will stay until paid for. The cost of taking down, re-casting and re-fixing is close on £100. The bell was originally cast in 1667, and recast in 1723 - 23 10 17

1926 01 01

1925 was sent from among us, and 1926, was ushered in by the century-old custom of firing two rockets on Parker's Piece at midnight. A small band of townsfolk gathered to attend the funeral obsequies of the dying year. At ten minutes before midnight Mr A. Deck arrived with the rockets and the crowd stood in silence. Then the bells of Great St Mary's were drowned out by a mighty rushing noise, a whiz and a bang and 1925 had gone. Then as the first chimes of the Catholic Church reached the ear there was a second whiz followed by another loud bang and 1926 was here

1929 03 19

Gt St Mary morning bell, p7

1930

1930 09 17

Miss Kitty Willers of Trumpington is a member of the Ladies' Guild of Change Ringers and is one of the very few women who regularly ring church bells. She has rung in over 200 towers in 14 different countries, once cycling 55 miles each way. On Saturday she biked 65 miles – partly in the rain - to attend the opening ceremony of the bells at St Mary's church, Bocking by the Bishop of Chelmsford. 30 09 17b

1933 03 09

Gt St Mary's bells a nuisance – 33 03 09

1934 05 12

Chesterton Bells poem by Richard Robinson [1.2]

1936 06 06

Friends of the Cambridge Town Silver Band will be glad to know that they are to give another broadcast on Saturday afternoon. This will be on the 'National' wave length but all B.B.C. stations are taking the programme. Last time the band opened with an original item by the conductor (Mr R.E. Austin) called 'Cambridge Bells' which featured the melody of the Roman Catholic Church chimes. This time they will start with his new military march 'Cantabrigia'. The band will be having a busy day for that evening they will be playing for the promenade concert on Christ's Pieces 36 06 06b

1936 05 25

The new electric clock in the tower of Cherry Hinton Church was given by Mrs Newport-Willson in memory of her husband. She also bore the expense of leading an electric cable into the church. The three feet dial is Coventry blue with gilded figures and hands. The hours are struck on the beautiful toned fourth bell and are heard all over the village. Churchyard trees have been lopped to give an unimpeded view. Over 50 years ago Mr Carter Willson built Brooklyn on Cherryhinton Road which was then the only house between Cherry Hinton brook and the railway bridge and the family is devoted to the parish church 36 05 25a

1937 01 16

Arthur Hoppett, 73, the oldest organist in Cambridge, started his musical career as a chorister at Trinity College under Sir Charles Villiers Stanford. His first appointment was at the Abbey Church, later moving to All Saint's. He played for five or six services every Sunday during the Great War and was accompanist at the musical evenings given by the late Oscar Browning where he met artistes of world-wide fame. His great hobby was his fine collection of stamps of the British Empire 37 01 13c amusing incidents – bumped into King Edward – 37 01 16f

1937 05 15

Chesterton church bells silent on Coronation Day – 37 05 15

1938 04 23

Old Chesterton bells poem composed by Richard Robinson 63 years ago – 38 04 23c

1938 06 16

The Bishop told the clergy he had money to make Mill Road cemetery chapel more dignified and beautiful. He would ask an architect to prepare plans. The chapel was used from time to time and more funerals might be held there. But it was felt that as so few burials took place, it was not worth the expenditure. It was extremely damp, there was no heating, it was difficult to ring the bell and it was such an ugly building it could never be made beautiful. But it was too drastic to close it altogether 38 06 16a & b

1940

1941 04 17

St Barnabas church now restored with new bell – 41 04 17

1942 02 13

Bell-ringer's Death. Many friends in Cambridge and throughout the Eastern Counties will learn with regret of the death, at his home in Union Lane, Chesterton, early on Wednesday morning of Mr. Walter Eusden, known for over three score years as one of the foremost bellringers in East Anglia. Eighty-two years of age, he had earned for himself by his unique knowledge of bells a reputation that was second to none. For 61 year of his life, he was bellringer at St. Andrew's Church, Old Chesterton, where perhaps his loss will be most felt. It was his hands that helped to toll the bells of Great St. Mary's, where for over 30 years he rang for countless famous occasions and events. Naturally, the curtailment of bellringing at the outbreak of war robbed him of his greatest interest in life. It was his ardent wish that he might ring for his diamond wedding, which he celebrated about 18 months ago. On one occasion, that of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, he rang no fewer than 5,042 changes on the bells of St Andrew's, Old Chesterton, and a tablet in the left aisle can be seen commemorating this. One of his greatest performances was to ring the first peals on the bells of the Roman Catholic Church, where also a tablet, this time in the bell tower, can be seen recalling the event. One of the most remarkable things about Mr. Eusden was that although he suffered from extreme deafness, he could tell exactly when any one bell was not striking correctly by the pull of the rope alone. He was also a great handbell ringer 42 02 13 CIPof – 42 02 12b

1942 11 16

Great St Mary's bells ring out for Victory in Africa – 42 11 16

1942 11 20

Joy Bells for Victory,—The bells of the Parish Church, Swavesey, long-silent as a war-time precaution, were rung from 9.30 to 10 a.m. in celebration of the British Army's victory in Egypt There were similar peals at various other churches 42 11 20 CIPof

1943 12 31

War-time Christmas. The sound of church bells in the still, cold air of the pre-dawn brought a reminder on Christmas morning that much has happened since the greatest of all festivals was celebrated a year ago. For many it was, inevitably in war, a time of sorrow, but beneath the cloud of sorrow could be seen the light of victory, bringing with it the hope and belief that 1943 may be the last Christmas of the war. With many of their loved ones away from home, scattered over the four corners of the earth, the people of Cambridge yet made the most of their celebrations. And in many homes absent places at the fireside were filled by other Service men and women, both British and American, who were offered that personal hospitality which means so much at Christmas tide. The Mayor and Mayoress of Cambridge, Ald and Mrs. W. L. Briggs, made a particularly full round of calls to hospitals etc on Christmas morning and afternoon, and it was well after tea-time when they made their way back to their own home. CIPof

1945 09 28

Orders for victory handbells, made from scrap metal from shot down German aircraft, are flowing in thick and fast at the Cambridge Gas Company's showroom, Mr. Stanley Miller, the hon. organiser, tells us. The bells, which are being sold in aid of the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund, are seven inches high and are made at labour cost by a Kentish firm. Some of them have been photographed by Battle or Britain pilots. One of them, personally cast by Group Capt. Douglas Bader, the famous legless flyer, will be sold at Cambridge in the near future to the highest bidder. So far over 70,000 bells have been sold in Britain alone. America has bought 20,000 of them. The metal for the bells comes from a scrap dump at Biggin Hill and was given by the Ministry of Aircraft Production. CIPof

1946 10 09

Gt St Mary's curfew bell to be rung again for first time since war; will sound at 9m followed by number of strokes indicating date of month; until 1929 a bell was rung at 5am, this 'The Apprentice's Bell', later 'The Bedmakers' Bell'; was discontinued as not needed now there were alarm clocks – 46 10 09

1950

1950 05 16

St Andrew's church Cherry Hinton, is yet another victim of the ravages of the death-watch beetle. The main beams supporting the roof have been attacked heavily, and may need to be replaced completely. The framework holding the bells is unsafe, and other parts of the church fabric require repair. Very little of any salvaged timber may be fit for further use. The cost is estimated at about £1,500

1951 09 15

Society of Cambridge Youths ring peal Great St Mary's Stedman caters, 5,079 changes – their first time in over 200 years 51 09 15

1952 06 18

Great St Mary's bells removed, p7

1952 06 25

Great St Mary's bells, p4

1952 10 07

Cherry Hinton church held a special thanksgiving service for the completion of repair work. The tower roof has been renewed and a new steel bell frame installed; the bells have been tuned and rehung and the belfry floor renewed. All the woodwork of the church has been treated against death watch beetle and woodworm and much of the roof re-tiled. The bells then rang out for the first time in four years

1953 10 03

The fund for re-hanging the bells of Cambridge's widely famed Great St Mary's church has raised under £1,000 of the £2,600 needed. The bells were taken down last year because of the ravages of a wood-destroying parasite and now the CDN has decided to open its own Bell Fund to supplement that sponsored by the church. All contributions will be acknowledged in our columns and whether large or small they may be handed in at our office. The CDN is opening its fund with a donation of £25 and hopes there will be a satisfying response. 53 10 03

1954 05 15

Gt St Mary's bells returned. Debate over whether the curfew which was rung on them since Medieval times at 9pm but stopped during War should be restarted. [2.7]

1954 03 18

The bells of St Mary's will soon ring out again due to the famous peal of 12 bells at Gt St Mary's Church, Cambridge, being re-erected after a two-year absence. A new steel frame has replaced the 200-year-old wooden frame which was eaten up and diseased by woodworm. The Coronation was the first that has not been hailed by the early 18th-century peal; they are rung for all national events and used to be rung for new and old masters of Cambridge colleges. There is a 13th bell in the tower; during the First World War it was used as a fire alarm at the First Eastern General Hospital 54 03 18

1954 04 12

Every seat in Great St Mary's church, Cambridge, was occupied when the Bishop of Ely rededicated the recently-reconditioned bells. A procession of bellringers, representatives of the bellfounders, the clergy, the Archdeacon of Ely and churchwardens went with the Bishop to the bell tower during the service. The bells were handed in to the custody of the Vicar to be used only with his authority. Then for the first time in two years the clamouring of 12 bells was heard over Cambridge. 54 04 12

1956 08 02

The bells of St Andrew the Great, Cambridge, were there long before the present church but are in poor condition. They are individually tuneless and badly blended together. Many are 'odd-struck' with the clapper not placed centrally inside the bell making ringing difficult. The bears are worn and rough and the frame in which they are hung was roughly constructed and moves when ringing is in progress. Now they have been taken down to be recast and rehung and are lying in the churchyard. 56 08 02

1957 02 13

The bells of St Andrew the Great returned to the church after being away for re-casting and re-tuning at Taylor's Foundry, Loughborough. The oldest was installed in 1660 when the new church was built. They are being re-hung and a full peal will be rung after they have been dedicated by the Bishop of Ely. 57 02 13a

1957 07 11

Miss C.E. Willers has been ringing Trumpington church bells for nearly 40 years; now she is paying for two new bells as a memorial to her family who have been in the village for generations. She cycled to Loughborough from her home in the High Street – and did the 85-mile journey in one day – to see them being cast. "Trumpington church is so old and beautiful it's a privilege to do anything for it", she said. 57 07 11 & 11a

1957 11 19

Trumpington bells dedicated, p9

1958 04 29

St Andrew the Great was rededicated by the Bishop of Ely after a restoration costing thousands of pounds. The church has undergone a complete transformation: the bells have been recast and rehung, the pulpit moved, the East End renovated and a new altar built. The lighting has also been modernised. 58 04 29

1958 07 12

The four bells of St Michael's church, Cambridge, which have not been rung for many years, are going as a gift to the church of St Augustine, Cashmere Hills near Christchurch, New Zealand where they will be in regular use. They date from the seventeenth-century prompting great excitement that bells of such antiquity should be going out there. Financial responsibility for the removal and shipping has been assumed by New Zealanders. The project was initiated by Michael Stewart-Smith of Fitzwilliam House which used St Michael's as its chapel. 58 07 12

1970

1977 02 23

Miss Kitty Willers, for more than 60 years a bellringer at Trumpington parish church, has died at the age of 78, having lived her whole life there. Her cycling and bellringing feats established her reputation as something of an eccentric. Until recently she would think nothing of cycling hundreds of miles. Once she refused offers of a lift to Loughborough to see the church's new bells being cast. When the church party arrived at the foundry they found Miss Willers there already as part of the reception committee. She had started cycling at four in the morning.

1982 09 30

The chapel bell at St John's College has been tolled by hand since the 17th century. But now the college porters will no longer have to climb the 30 steps in the gatehouse at six o'clock every day, and twice on Sundays, to summon the congregation to prayer. Engineers have installed an electronic control unit so the bells can ring out at the touch of a switch. Bob Fuller, the head porter, said "I have just celebrated 30 years of working at the college and this is the best present." 82 09 30b

1985 09 10

The redundant church of St Andrew the Great could end up as a row of shops following the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance decision to sell it as a "most valuable central property". The church stands opposite Christ's College at the entrance to the Lion Yard shopping centre. It already has permission to be used for educational purposes, as a restaurant or for community use but planners have indicated they would consider shops in the body of the church. However the structure would have to be maintained together with its famous memorial to Captain Cook and access to the tower of six bells which are frequently rung. 85 09 10

1985 10 24

Reg Badcock of Lode repairs cracked and broken church bells. He has made almost all the special equipment he needs from pieces of metal debris which fill every corner of his workshops. A few bells were experimentally repaired by the British Welding Institute at Abington, where he had worked for 25 years. But they were not prepared to carry on the task, so Reg took over. He has worked on bells from Abbotsley and Foxton. Each has its own character and markings but he clears away one his cluttered benches and solves the problem. The importance of his work is recognised nationally: amongst the jobs waiting for him is a bell from a church near Stratford-on-Avon. 85 10 24c & d

1986 05 12

George Clarke is retiring after 26 years as verger of Great St Mary's church. He first came to the church as a choirboy in the 1920s and until war broke out rang the bell for curfew every night and wound the church clock. As verger he has been guide and mentor to five vicars, fixed everything from

plumbing to carpentry and led the processions at services with military authority and style. Now his devotion has been rewarded with an Honorary MA from the University 86 05 12

1986 12 08

Developers have revealed plans to convert Cambridge's most controversial city centre landmark, St Andrew the Great Church, into shops. The proposals end 15 years of doubt over the future of the 150-year-old building which was made redundant in 1984. It also means that alternative scheme to turn it into a tourist and heritage centre has failed. The peal of eight bells will be maintained and the Cook Memorial preserved. 86 12 08

1987 04 09

Frank King, bellringer at Gt St Mary's – feature – 87 04 09

1988 01 07

A plan to transform the church of St Andrew the Great into a shopping arcade has been thrown out by the city council. A similar scheme was rejected after 500 letters of objection were received. A pressure group hopes to protect the church from commercial use and retain it for Christian worship. But the cost of renovating the building has rocketed and the Bishop of Ely fears the long delays mean it can never be restored. Closed more than three years ago, the 145-year-old building contains a memorial to Captain Cook the explorer and a peal of eight bells 88 01 07

1988 03 21

A three-ton monster bell, the biggest in Canterbury Cathedral, has been bought to a small Lode firm for welding repairs. It is the largest job ever undertaken by Soundweld, of Quay Road, in its 20-year history. 'The Great Dunstan' which tolls the hours at the cathedral is one of the largest bells in the country, almost 60ft in diameter and more than five-feet tall. It arrived by transporter and was lifted by crane to a specially-prepared plinth. Repairs will take several weeks 88 03 21